

### IN THE CLAIMS

Please make the following amendments to the claims:

1-5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently Amended) A method ~~comprising: as recited in claim 4;~~  
generating an offset map to indicate an exact location of each file in a backup image, before any file data has been written to the backup image;  
storing the offset map to the backup image on a storage device before storing the file data to the backup image;  
subsequent to writing the offset map to the backup image, writing the files to the backup image;  
prior to generating the offset map, receiving a request to generate the backup image, the request indicating a backup path to be included in the backup image;  
generating a list of files to be included in the backup image based on the backup path indicated in the request; and  
writing the list of files to be included in the backup image to the backup image,  
wherein said generating an offset map to indicate the exact location of each file in a backup image includes calculating an amount of space required in the backup image for each file included in the list of files to be included in the backup image, and  
wherein said calculating the space required in the backup image for each file included in the list of files to be included in the backup image includes compensating for any headers to be written as part of the backup image for the file.

7-8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) A method ~~comprising: as recited in claim 3;~~  
generating an offset map to indicate an exact location of each file in a backup image, before any file data has been written to the backup image;

storing the offset map to the backup image on a storage device before storing the file data to the backup image;

subsequent to writing the offset map to the backup image, writing the files to the backup image;

prior to generating the offset map, receiving a request to generate the backup image, the request indicating a backup path to be included in the backup image;

generating a list of files to be included in the backup image based on the backup path indicated in the request; and

writing the list of files to be included in the backup image to the backup image,

wherein said generating a list of files to be included in the backup image based on the backup path indicated in the request includes, generating a bitmap with a number of bits equal to ~~the~~a total number of inodes available on ~~the~~a file system that hosts the backup path, each bit representing an inode associated with a file on the file system and indicating whether the associated file is included in the backup image.

10-12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently Amended) A method comprising: as recited in claim 1,

generating an offset map to indicate an exact location of each file in a backup image, before any file data has been written to the backup image; and

storing the offset map to the backup image on a storage device before storing the file data to the backup image,

wherein the offset map comprises an array having a number of elements equal to ~~the~~a number of inodes on ~~the~~a file system that hosts ~~the~~a backup path, each element of the array representing an inode on the file system and indicating the exact location in the backup image of a file associated with ~~the~~a number of the inode.

14-21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) A processing system to generate a backup image, the processing system comprising: as recited in claim 20,  
a processor;  
a network communication interface to provide the processing system with data communication with a plurality of clients, including a data management application, over a network;  
a storage interface to provide the processing system with data communication with a set of mass storage devices; and  
a memory containing code which, when executed by the processor, causes the processing system to execute a process of generating a backup image on behalf of the data management application, the process comprising:  
generating an offset map to indicate an exact location of each file in a backup image, before any file data has been written to the backup image;  
writing the offset map to the backup image before writing the file data to the backup image;  
subsequent to writing the offset map to the backup image, writing the files to the backup image;  
prior to generating the offset map, receiving a request to generate the backup image, the request indicating a backup path to be included in the backup image;  
generating a list of files to be included in the backup image based on the backup path indicated in the request; and  
writing the list of files to be included in the backup image to the backup image,  
wherein said generating an offset map to indicate the exact location of each file in the backup image includes calculating a space required in the backup image for each file included in the list of files to be included in the backup image, and  
wherein said calculating the space required in the backup image for each file included in the list of files to be included in the backup image includes compensating for any headers to be written to the backup image for the file.

23-24. (Canceled)

25. (Currently Amended) A processing system to generate a backup image, the processing system comprising: as recited in claim 19,  
a processor;  
a network communication interface to provide the processing system with data communication with a plurality of clients, including a data management application, over a network;  
a storage interface to provide the processing system with data communication with a set of mass storage devices; and  
a memory containing code which, when executed by the processor, causes the processing system to execute a process of generating a backup image on behalf of the data management application, the process comprising:  
generating an offset map to indicate an exact location of each file in a backup image, before any file data has been written to the backup image;  
writing the offset map to the backup image before writing the file data to the backup image;  
subsequent to writing the offset map to the backup image, writing the files to the backup image;  
prior to generating the offset map, receiving a request to generate the backup image, the request indicating a backup path to be included in the backup image;  
generating a list of files to be included in the backup image based on the backup path indicated in the request; and  
writing the list of files to be included in the backup image to the backup image,  
wherein said generating a list of files to be included in the backup image based on the backup path indicated in the request includes, generating a bitmap with a number of bits equal to ~~the~~a total number of inodes available on ~~the~~a file system that hosts the backup path, each bit representing an inode associated with a file on the file system and indicating whether the associated file is included in the backup image.

26-28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently Amended) A processing system to generate a backup image, the processing system comprising:as recited in claim 17,

a processor;

a network communication interface to provide the processing system with data communication with a plurality of clients, including a data management application, over a network;

a storage interface to provide the processing system with data communication with a set of mass storage devices; and

a memory containing code which, when executed by the processor, causes the processing system to execute a process of generating a backup image on behalf of the data management application, the process comprising:

generating an offset map to indicate the exact location of each file in a backup image, before any file data has been written to the backup image; and

writing the offset map to the backup image before writing the file data to the backup image,

wherein the offset map comprises an array having a number of elements equal to the number of inodes on the file system that hosts the backup path, each element of the array representing an inode on the file system and indicating the exact location in the backup image of a file associated with the number of the inode.

30-52. (Canceled)